

# PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the  
INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINING AUTHORITY

To:

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## PCT

### NOTIFICATION OF TRANSMITTAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT (PCT Rule 71.1)

Date of mailing (day/month/year)	09.04.2001
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Applicant's or agent's file reference TACEL 6 209 PCT	<b>IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION</b>
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International application No. PCT/EP00/06350	International filing date (day/month/year) 04/07/2000	Priority date (day/month/year) 05/07/1999
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Applicant ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE (EPFL)
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1. The applicant is hereby notified that this International Preliminary Examining Authority transmits herewith the international preliminary examination report and its annexes, if any, established on the international application.
2. A copy of the report and its annexes, if any, is being transmitted to the International Bureau for communication to all the elected Offices.
3. Where required by any of the elected Offices, the International Bureau will prepare an English translation of the report (but not of any annexes) and will transmit such translation to those Offices.

#### 4. REMINDER

The applicant must enter the national phase before each elected Office by performing certain acts (filing translations and paying national fees) within 30 months from the priority date (or later in some Offices) (Article 39(1)) (see also the reminder sent by the International Bureau with Form PCT/IB/301).

Where a translation of the international application must be furnished to an elected Office, that translation must contain a translation of any annexes to the international preliminary examination report. It is the applicant's responsibility to prepare and furnish such translation directly to each elected Office concerned.

For further details on the applicable time limits and requirements of the elected Offices, see Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

Name and mailing address of the IPEA/  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized officer  Krage, D  Tel. +49 89 2399-7530
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International Bureau



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(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

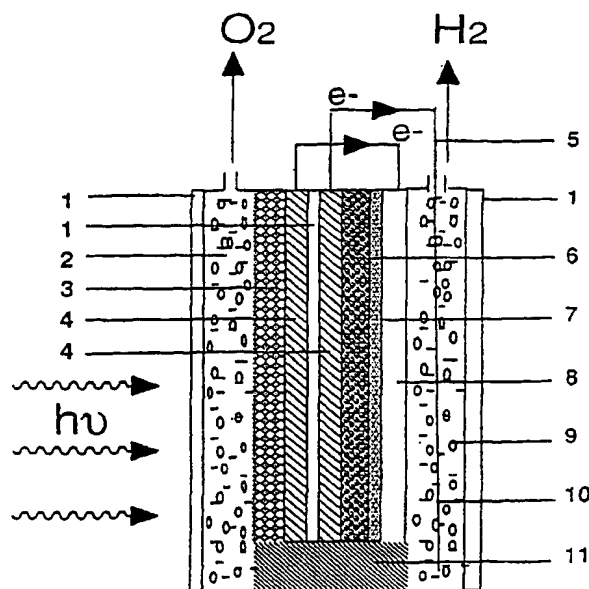
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**Published:**

- With international search report.
- Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments.

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: **TANDEM CELL FOR WATER CLEAVAGE BY VISIBLE LIGHT**



(57) Abstract: The tandem cell or photoelectrochemical system for the cleavage of water to hydrogen and oxygen by visible light consisting of two superimposed photocells, both cells being connected electrically. The photoactive material in the top cell is a semiconducting oxide placed in contact with an aqueous solution. This semiconducting oxide absorbs the blue and green part of the solar emission spectrum of a light source or light sources and generates with the energy collected oxygen and protons from water. The not absorbed yellow and red light transmits the top cell and enters a second photocell, the bottom cell, which is mounted, in the direction of the light behind, preferably directly behind the top cell. The bottom cell includes a dye sensitized mesoporous photovoltaic film. The bottom cell converts the yellow, red and near infrared portion of the sunlight to drive the reduction of the protons which are produced in the top cell during the photo catalytic water oxidation process, to hydrogen.

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**15 TANDEM CELL FOR WATER CLEAVAGE BY VISIBLE LIGHT**

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The invention is related to a photoelectrochemical system for the cleavage of water to hydrogen and oxygen according to the preamble of the independent claim 1.

20 Previous systems that accomplish the direct splitting of water by visible light with a comparably high efficiency employ very expensive single crystal semiconductor materials. For details see O.Khaselev and J.Turner, Science 280, 1998, 455).

Therefore these previous systems are not suitable for practical applications to produce hydrogen and oxygen from sunlight.

25

According to the invention a photoelectrochemical system is characterized by the features of the characterizing part of the independent claim 1. The depending claims are related to particularly favorable embodiments of the invention. The improved photoelectrochemical system provides for photoelectrochemical tandem cells that show

30 a considerably high efficiency. Further the photoelectrochemical system can be manufactured at relatively low cost. A further advantage of the present invention is that seawater can be used for the process instead of pure water.

Description of the invention, device structure.

In the following the invention will now be described by way of example and with  
5 reference to the accompanying drawings that show the following:

Fig. 1 shows a schematic drawing of the water photolysis device that is the  
object of the present invention.

10 Fig. 2 shows the spectral dependency of the photon-to electric current  
conversion achieved with the sensitized  $\text{TiO}_2$  films for several  
ruthenium complexes; it shows the incident photon to current  
conversion efficiencies obtained with various sensitizer;

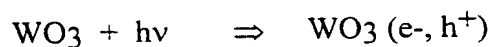
15 Fig. 3 shows an energy level diagram that illustrates the functioning of the  
tandem cell; it shows the Z scheme of biphotonic water photolysis

A schematic representation of the water photolysis device, that is the object of the  
present invention is described is illustrated in Fig. 1. The device consists of two photo  
20 systems connected in series. The cell on the left contains the aqueous electrolyte that is  
subjected to water photolysis. The electrolyte is composed of water as a solvent to  
which an electrolyte has been added for ionic conduction. Saline seawater can also be  
used as a water source in which case the addition of electrolyte becomes superfluous.  
Light enters from the left side of the cell through a glass window (1). After traversing  
25 the electrolyte (2) it impinges on the back wall of the cell constituted by a mesoporous  
semiconductor film composed of an oxide such as  $\text{WO}_3$  or  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  (3), The latter is  
deposited onto a transparent conducting oxide film (4), made from a material such as  
fluorine doped tin dioxide that serves as current collector which is deposited on the  
glass sheet (1). The oxide absorbs the blue and green part of the solar spectrum while  
30 the yellow and red light is transmitted through it. The yellow and red part of the solar  
spectrum is captured by a second cell mounted behind the back wall of the first cell.  
The second cell contains a dye sensitized mesoporous  $\text{TiO}_2$  film. Its functions as a

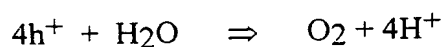
- 3 -

light driven electric bias increasing the electrochemical potential of the electrons that emerge from the  $\text{WO}_3$  film under illumination to render the reduction of water to hydrogen possible. It consists of a transparent conducting oxide film (4) deposited on the back side of the glass sheet (1) constituting the back wall of the first cell. The conducting oxide film is covered by the dye-derivatized nanocrystalline titania film (6). The latter is in contact with the organic redox electrolyte (7) and the counter electrode (8) consisting of a glass which is rendered conductive on the side of the organic electrolyte by deposition of a transparent conductive oxide layer. Behind the counterelectrode there is a second compartment (9) containing an aqueous electrolyte of the same composition as in the front compartment (2). Hydrogen is evolved at the cathode (10) which is immersed in this second electrolyte compartment. The two electrolyte compartments (2) and (10) have the same composition and are separated by an ion conducting membrane or a glass frit (11).

We shall now discuss a specific embodiment of such a tandem device achieving the direct cleavage of water into hydrogen and oxygen by visible light. A thin film of nanocrystalline tungsten trioxide absorbs the blue part of the solar spectrum.

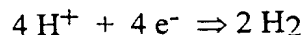


The valence band holes ( $h^+$ ) created by band gap excitation of the oxide serve to oxidize water forming oxygen and protons:



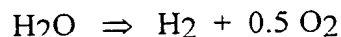
while the conduction band electrons are collected on the conducting glass support forming the back wall of the first photocell. From there on they are fed into the second photocell that consists of a dye sensitized nanocrystalline  $\text{TiO}_2$  film. The latter is mounted directly behind the  $\text{WO}_3$  film capturing the green and red part of the solar spectrum that is transmitted through the top electrode. The role of the second photocell is merely that of a photo driven bias. The electrochemical potential of the electrons is

sufficiently increased by passing through the second photocell that they can reduce the protons produced during water oxidation to hydrogen.



5

The overall reaction corresponds to the splitting of water by visible light.



10 Semiconducting oxides, such as  $\text{WO}_3$  and  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  are the materials of choice for the photo-anode as they are stable under operation resisting to both dark and photo corrosion. Tungsten trioxide and ferric oxide are so far the only known and readily available oxide semiconductors that are capable of producing oxygen using visible light. The electrons generated in the oxide are collected by the conducting glass and are subsequently fed into a second photocell that is placed directly behind the oxide film.

15 The photo-active element of this second cell is a dye sensitized mesoporous  $\text{TiO}_2$  capturing the yellow and red light that is transmitted through the oxide electrode. It serves as a photo- driven bias increasing the electrochemical potential of the photoelectrons produced by band gap excitation of the oxide to render reduction of water to hydrogen feasible.

20

Fig. 2 presents the spectral dependency of the photon-to electric current conversion achieved with the sensitized  $\text{TiO}_2$  films for several ruthenium complexes. Very high efficiencies of current generation, exceeding 75% are obtained. When corrected for the inevitable reflection and absorption losses in the conducting glass that serves to support the film the yields are practically 100 percent. For the dyes  $\text{RuL}_2(\text{SCN})_2$  and  $\text{RuL}'(\text{SCN})_3$  the photo-response of the film extends well into the red and near infrared part of the spectrum making these complexes an appropriate choice for the harvesting of the red and yellow part of sun light by the second photocell in the tandem system .

25

30 The functioning of the tandem cell is further illustrated by the energy level diagram shown in Fig. 3. There is close analogy to the Z-scheme operative in the light reaction in green plants in which the two photo systems are connected in series, one affording

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oxidation of water to oxygen and the other generating the NADPH used in CO<sub>2</sub> fixation. At this stage of development the overall AM 1.5 solar light to chemical conversion efficiency achieved stands at 5 %.

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#### Working Example

The preparation of transparent mesoporous WO<sub>3</sub> films of a few micron thickness has been achieved via a sol-gel type process. A colloidal WO<sub>3</sub> precursor solution was prepared first and after mixing with polyvinyl alcohol, films were deposited on conducting glass (Nippon Sheet Glass, 10 ohm/o, fluorine-doped SnO<sub>2</sub> glass (TCO)) surface. In order to supply the bias necessary to reach the plateau photocurrent, two in series connected sensitized mesoporous TiO<sub>2</sub> injection cells were placed under the transparent WO<sub>3</sub> film. This configuration reached a photocurrent of 3.5 mA/cm<sup>2</sup> for hydrogen generation in simulated AM 1.5 sunlight. This corresponds to an overall solar to chemical conversion efficiency of 5 % for light induced water cleavage by AM 1.5 standard sunlight.

This example illustrates the successful operation of the tandem device which is the object of the present invention. It is based on two superimposed photocells having complementary light absorption in the visible and near infrared range according to the embodiment described in the patent disclosure. Such a tandem cell accomplishes the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen by visible light directly rendering the use of a separate electrolysis cell superfluous. Thus it is preferred over alternative systems where traditional photovoltaic cells, such as silicon solar cells are used in conjunction with a water electrolyzer. The present invention renders the water electrolyzer superfluous reducing the cost of the water splitting device substantially. Apart from the cost there it is also advantageous from the operational point of view. In the conventional photoelectrolysis systems based on the combination of silicon solar cells with a water electrolyzer, several photovoltaic cells have to be connected in series to yield the voltage of about 1.7 V required for the operation of the water electrolyzer. Furthermore each of the photovoltaic cells should operate at its optimum power point

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to keep losses low and the efficiency high. However as the power point fluctuates according to the intensity and spectral distribution of the incident solar radiation one needs to install a very complicated system that changes the number of in series connected cells in response to the meteorological conditions. This renders the system  
5 expensive and its operation complex. In contrast the tandem cell described by the present invention operates at practically the same efficiency irrespective of the intensity and spectral distribution of the incident solar light.

The additional advantage of the present invention is that it uses low cost materials, the  
10 semiconductor layers employed being made from cheap and readily available oxide films having a mesoporous morphology. The tandem cell exhibits an overall conversion efficiency of 5 % for the photo cleavage of water into hydrogen and oxygen.

15 A further advantage of the present invention is that seawater can be employed instead of pure water. The salt contained in seawater produces the ionic conductivity required for operating the water cleavage device. This saves the cost for desalination of the water and for providing the electrolyte supplement which is required if pure water is employed in the electrolyzer.

20 The invention relates to a tandem device based on two superimposed photocells having complementary light absorption in the visible and near infrared range. Such a tandem cell accomplishes the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen by visible light directly rendering the use of a separate electrolysis cell superfluous. The additional  
25 advantage of the present invention is that it uses low cost materials, the semiconductor layers employed being made from cheap and readily available oxide films having a mesoporous morphology. The tandem cell exhibits an overall conversion efficiency of 5 % for the photo cleavage of water into hydrogen and oxygen.

30 The tandem cell or photoelectrochemical system for the cleavage of water to hydrogen and oxygen by visible light consisting of two superimposed photocells, both cells being connected electrically. The photoactive material in the top cell is a semiconducting oxide placed in contact with an aqueous solution. This semiconducting oxide absorbs



- 7 -

the blue and green part of the solar emission spectrum of a light source or light sources and generates with the energy collected oxygen and protons from water. The not absorbed yellow and red light transmits the top cell and enters a second photocell, the bottom cell, which is mounted, in the direction of the light behind, preferably directly behind the top cell. The bottom cell includes a dye sensitized mesoporous photovoltaic film. The bottom cell converts the yellow, red and near infrared portion of the sunlight to drive the reduction of the protons which are produced in the top cell during the photocatalytic water oxidation process, to hydrogen.

Although the use of the photoelectrochemical system with the tandem cell according to the invention can be most advantageously used with sun light, it can be driven with the light of any light source or light sources that emit light of the required frequencies.

The reference numbers used in Fig. 1 denominate the following:

- 1 Glass sheet
- 2 Aqueous electrolyte
- 3 Mesoporous oxide film, e.g.,  $\text{WO}_3$   $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$
- 4 Transparent conducting oxide (TCO) film
- 5 Electrical connection
- 6 Dye sensitized mesoporous  $\text{TiO}_2$  film
- 7 Organic redox electrolyte for dye sensitized solar cell (DYSC), used in tandem
- 8 Counter electrode for DYSC
- 9 Aqueous electrolyte (same composition as 2)
- 10 Catalytic cathode for  $\text{H}_2$  evolution
- 11 Glass frit

## Claims

1. A photoelectrochemical system for the cleavage of water to hydrogen and oxygen by visible light consisting of two superimposed photocells, both cells being connected electrically, characterized in that the photoactive material in the top cell is a semiconducting oxide placed in contact with an aqueous solution, said oxide absorbing the blue and green part of the solar emission spectrum to generate oxygen and protons from water and transmitting the yellow and red light to a second photocell mounted behind the top cell and composed of a dye sensitized mesoporous photovoltaic film, said bottom cell converting the yellow, red and near infrared portion of the sunlight to drive the reduction of the protons, produced in the top cell during the photo catalytic water oxidation process, to hydrogen.
2. A photoelectrochemical system for the direct cleavage of water to hydrogen and oxygen by visible light according to claim 1, consisting of two superimposed photocells, both cells being connected electrically, wherein the photoactive material present in the top photocell is a thin film of  $\text{WO}_3$  or  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  deposited on a conducting substrate or conducting glass and placed in contact with an aqueous electrolyte solution, said  $\text{WO}_3$  tungsten oxide or  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  iron oxide absorbing the blue and green part of the solar emission spectrum to generate oxygen and protons from water and transmitting the yellow and red light to a bottom photocell mounted behind the top photocell and composed of a dye sensitized photovoltaic film, said second photocell converting the yellow, red and near infrared portion of the solar emission spectrum to drive the reduction of the protons, produced in the top photocell during the water oxidation process, said reduction of protons to hydrogen gas taking place in an electrolyte compartment mounted behind the bottom photocell and being separated from the top photocell compartment where oxygen is evolved by a glass frit or an ion conducting membrane.

3. A photoelectrochemical system according to claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the photoactive oxide material present in the top cell is a doped form of  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ , the dopant being selected from the elements Si, Ge, Sn, Pb, Ti, Zr, Hf, Sb, Bi, V, Nb, Ta, Mo, Tc, and Re or F, Cl, Br and I.
- 5
4. A photoelectrochemical system according to claim any of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the photoactive  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  in the doped or undoped form is present as a smooth layer, said layer having a thickness between 50 nm and 5000 nm said layer transmitting light of wavelength above 600 nm.
- 10
5. A photoelectrochemical system according to any of claims 1- 4, characterized in that the sensitizer is a ruthenium polypyridyl complex chosen from  $\text{RuL}_2(\text{NCS})_2$  and  $\text{RuL}'(\text{NCS})_3$ , where  $\text{L} = 4,4'$ -dicarboxy-2,2'-bipyridine and  $\text{L}' = 4,4',4''$ -tricarboxy-2,2',6',2''-terpyridine.
- 15
6. A photoelectrochemical system according to any of claims 1-5, characterized in that the oxygen and hydrogen evolution reaction take place both in the top cell and/or in separated compartments, said compartments being connected by an ion conducting membrane or a glass frit.
- 20
7. A photoelectrochemical system according to any of claims 1 -6, characterized in that the hydrogen evolution is catalyzed by a metal, chosen from Ni, Pt, Pd, Ru, Rh and Ir ,or alternatively by a polyacid or heteropolyacid chosen from tungsten, vanadium and molybdenum., said catalyst being deposited in the form
- 25
- of a thin coating on the cathode of the cell.
8. A photoelectrochemical system according to any of claims 1-7, characterized in that seawater is used as a source for hydrogen and oxygen in the water cleavage or water splitting device.
- 30

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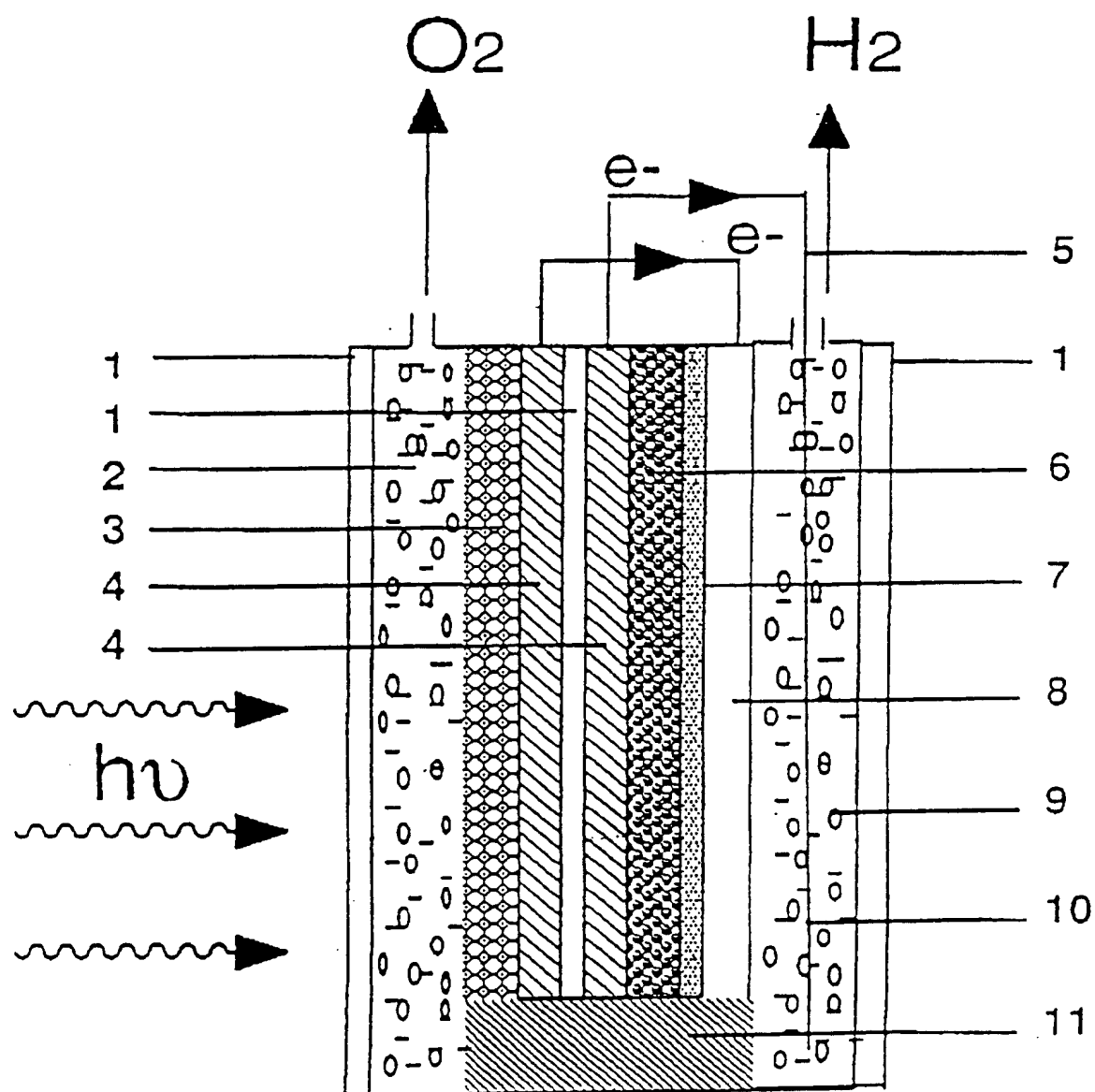
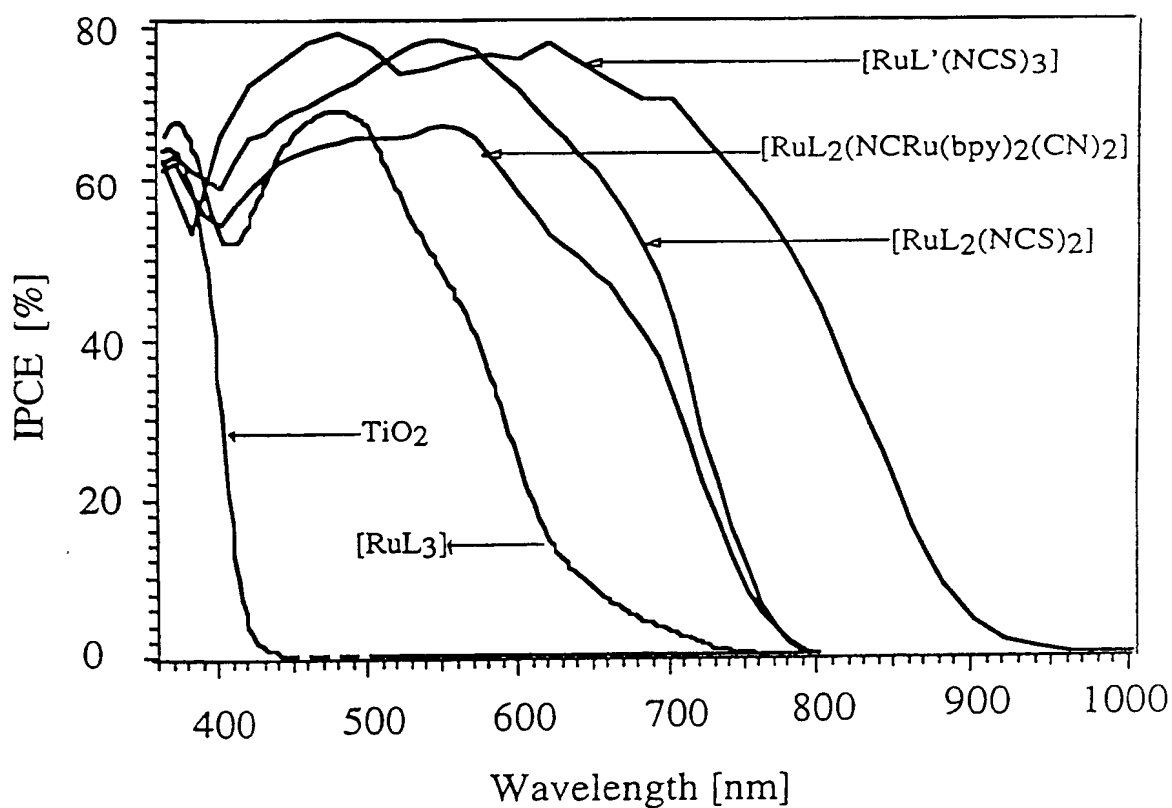


Fig. 1

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Incident Photon to Current Conversion  
Efficiencies Obtained with Various Sensitizers



L' = 4,4',4''-tricarboxy-2,2', 6',2''-terpyridine

L = 4,4'-dicarboxy-2,2'-bipyridine

Fig. 2

## The Z scheme of biphotonic water photolysis

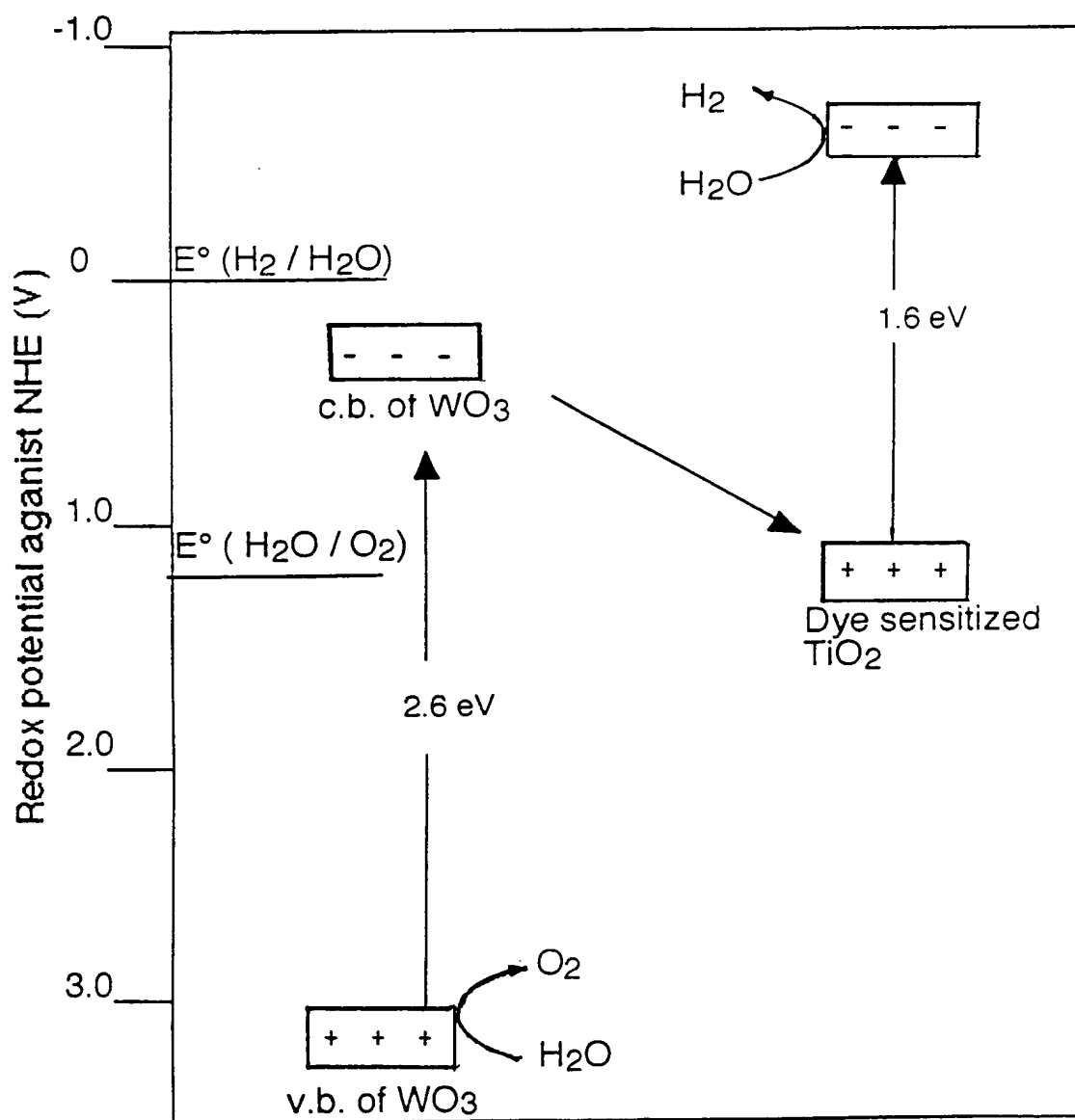


Fig. 3

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

## PCT

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference <b>TACEL 6 209 PCT</b>	<b>FOR FURTHER ACTION</b> see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.	
International application No. <b>PCT/EP 00/ 06350</b>	International filing date (day/month/year) <b>04/07/2000</b>	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year) <b>05/07/1999</b>
Applicant <b>ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE (EPFL)</b>		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 3 sheets.



It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

**1. Basis of the report**

- a. With regard to the **language**, the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.



the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).

- b. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing :



contained in the international application in written form.



filed together with the international application in computer readable form.



furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.



furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.



the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.



the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished

2. ☐ **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (See Box I).

3. ☐ **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

4. With regard to the **title**,



the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.



the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the **abstract**,



the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.



the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is Figure No.



as suggested by the applicant.



because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.



because this figure better characterizes the invention.

1



None of the figures.

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/EP 00/06350

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
IPC 7 C25B1/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)  
IPC 7 C25B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, INSPEC, WPI Data

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	BORMAN S: "HYDROGEN FROM WATER AND LIGHT" CHEMICAL AND ENGINEERING NEWS, US, AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY. COLUMBUS, vol. 76, no. 16, page 11-12 XP000740074 ISSN: 0009-2347 see whole document	1
A	US 3 925 212 A (DIMITER I. TCHERNEV) 9 December 1975 (1975-12-09) column 2, line 33 - line 50 column 4, line 36 - column 5, line 53 figure 3 --- -/--	1

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

## \* Special categories of cited documents:

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

14 November 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

21/11/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2  
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk  
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,  
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Groseiller, P



## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US 00/06350

## C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	DATABASE INSPEC 'Online! INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS, STEVENAGE, GB; GRATZEL M: "Photoelectrochemical solar energy conversion by dye sensitization" Database accession no. 5850979 XP002125396 abstract & FUTURE GENERATION PHOTOVOLTAIC TECHNOLOGIES. FIRST NREL CONFERENCE, DENVER, CO, USA, 24-26 MARCH 1997, no. 404, pages 119-127, AIP Conference Proceedings, 1997, AIP, USA ISSN: 0094-243X -----	1
A	US 4 466 869 A (WILLIAM AYERS) 21 August 1984 (1984-08-21) column 8, line 24 - line 37 -----	1

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/EP 00/06350

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 3925212      A	09-12-1975	NONE	
US 4466869      A	21-08-1984	NONE	

## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

## NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Commissioner  
 US Department of Commerce  
 United States Patent and Trademark  
 Office, PCT  
 2011 South Clark Place Room  
 CP2/5C24  
 Arlington, VA 22202  
 ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE  
 in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 27 March 2001 (27.03.01)	
International application No. PCT/EP00/06350	Applicant's or agent's file reference TACEL 6 209 PCT
International filing date (day/month/year) 04 July 2000 (04.07.00)	Priority date (day/month/year) 05 July 1999 (05.07.99)
Applicant GRÄTZEL, Michel et al	

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

☒ in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

25 January 2001 (25.01.01)

☐ in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:
2. The election ☒ was
☐ was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland  Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35	Authorized officer  Zakaria EL KHODARY  Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38
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# PCT

## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference <b>TACEL 6 209 PCT</b>		See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416) <b>FOR FURTHER ACTION</b>
International application No. <b>PCT/EP00/06350</b>	International filing date (day/month/year) <b>04/07/2000</b>	Priority date (day/month/year) <b>05/07/1999</b>
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC <b>C25B1/00</b>		
Applicant <b>ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE (EPFL)</b>		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.


2. This REPORT consists of a total of 4 sheets, including this cover sheet.

- ☐ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I ☒ Basis of the report
- II ☐ Priority
- III ☐ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
- V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI ☐ Certain documents cited
- VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
- VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand  <b>25/01/2001</b>	Date of completion of this report  <b>09.04.2001</b>
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:   <b>European Patent Office</b> <b>D-80298 Munich</b> <b>Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d</b> <b>Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465</b>	Authorized officer  <b>Mizera, E</b>  Telephone No. <b>+49 89 2399 8580</b>



# INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No. PCT/EP00/06350

## I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)*):
- Description, pages:**

1-7 as originally filed

### Claims, No.:

1-8 as originally filed

### Drawings, sheets:

1/3-3/3 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
- ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
- ☐ the claims, Nos.:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/EP00/06350

☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

*(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)*

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

**V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims 1-8
	No: Claims
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims 1-8
	No: Claims
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims 1-8
	No: Claims

2. Citations and explanations  
**see separate sheet**

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

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International application No. PCT/EP00/06350

AS TO BOX V:

1. According to claim 1 different parts of the solar emission spectrum are used in two different superimposed photocells in order to cleave water to hydrogen and oxygen. In the first cell a semiconducting oxide absorbs the blue and green part of the spectrum, whereas in the second cell the yellow and red components drive the reduction of the protons, produced in the first cell, to hydrogen.
2. This requires all the parts of the first cell to be transparent for the red and yellow components of the light, and the photoelectrodes to be specifically adapted to the respective components of the light. Claim 1 mentions a semiconducting oxide, absorbing the blue and green parts, and a dye sensitized mesoporous photovoltaic film, for the conversion of the red and yellow parts.
3. None of the documents cited in the search report discloses these materials as parts of two different photocells that are electrically connected and superimposed. Claim 1 and claims 2-8, depending thereon, thus meet the requirements of Art.33(2) PCT (novelty).
4. The claimed arrangement renders the use of a separate electrolysis cell superfluous. Moreover low cost materials can be used, even seawater can serve as electrolyte. As the state of the art does not render the claimed photoelectrochemical system obvious, this supports the inventive step required under Art.33(3)PCT.